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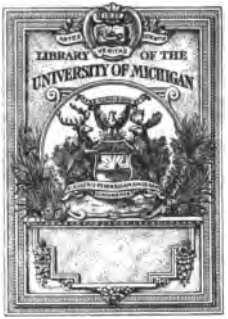

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MONADNOC

AND OTHER

SKETCHES IN VERSE

BY

J. E. NESMITH

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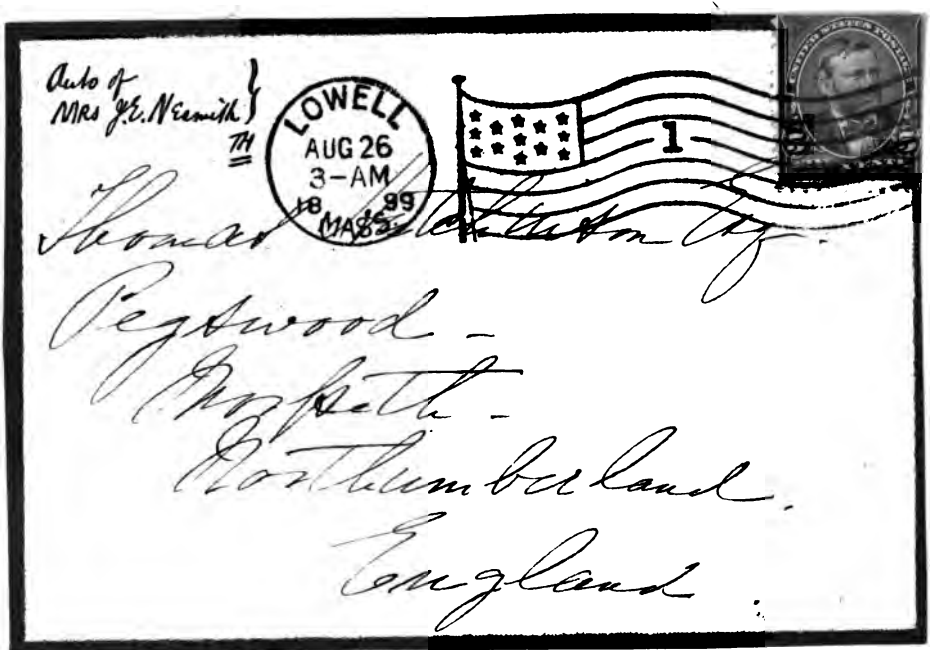

156655

INSCRIBED TO

H. R. N.

"The barren tender of a poet's debt."

SHAKESPEARE

156655

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MONADNOC.

"Knowing a better Spirit doth use your name."
Shakespeare.

MONADNOC.

I.

From field and fold aloof he stands,
A lonely peak in peopled lands,
Rock-ridged above his wooded bands:

Like a huge arrow-head in stone,
Or baffled stag at bay alone, —
Round him the pack-like hills lie prone.

The gentle hours, in gradual flight,
Weave round his huge impassive height
A warp of gloom, a woof of light:

All day the purple shadows dream
Along his slopes, or upward stream;
And shafts of golden sunlight gleam, —

Searching the dusk of humid dells,
To sleep among the sleeping wells,
And frowning rocks where Echo dwells.

Mild as the breath from isles of palm,
The breezes, blowing in the calm,
Breathe sweet with balsam, fern, and balm:

Huge cloud-cliffs fringe the blue profound,
And lift their large white faces round
The dim horizon's distant bound.

II.

If the dull task begins to tire,
When dawn's pure flood of rosy fire
Strikes up each beaming wall and spire,

Awake, and mount his rocky stair, —
Drink deep from wells of taintless air, —
And lighter grows the load of care:

Hampshire's white hills at distance rise,
Pure peaks that climb the azure skies,
The peopled plain's blue boundaries.

The mist, in wither'd wreaths and swirls,
Is blown before the breeze which curls
Up from the shining underworlds:

Stray troops from teeming cities take
His battlements with shouts, and make
The sleepy echoes start awake;

The ringing laugh, the random rhyme,
Come back in mimic as they climb,
From aged crags as old as time.

We see the creeping morning train
Crawl out across the distant plain,
The smoke drifts like a dusky stain;

And hear afar the iron horse
Hurl'd headlong on his gleaming course,
A fragment of the cosmic force;

His screaming vapors hoarse with sound,
And clash'd and crashing on the ground
His clanging wheels roll'd ever round:

A wing'd and wandering meteor sent
To be a woodland wonderment,
In vales and valleys indolent;

A fiery vision which invades
The stillness of sequester'd shades,
And daisied fields and drowsy glades;

And roars with an intenser light
In dim recesses of the night,
Filling the forest with affright.

Faint from below resounds or shrills
His shriek among the lonely hills,
His foot above the foaming rills;

He feels the fires that gnaw his heart,
Before him shapes and shadows start,
Behind him fields and forests dart;

He rolls along the ringing rails,
The cliffs and loud indignant dales
Echo with wild and warning wails.

The shock and tumult came not near
The still parks of the mountaineer,
But softer sound for him to hear:

His straining sight may only mark
A floating smoke or flying spark
Flit thro' the daylight or the dark.

III.

At dusk he watches from the steep
The gloom which wraps the distant deep
Across the sinking landscape creep;

To feed upon the tender light,
And each serene and lovely sight
That blooms upon the verge of night.

Beyond brown beds of brake and fern,
Like embers in the night's black urn,
The sullen fires of sunset burn:

The caverns of the burning beam,
Behind dark clouds, thro' rent and seam
And fiery cracks and chasms gleam;

Deep pits of flame beyond the pines,
Whose stems, in long and slender lines,
Divide the light as day declines;

Fill'd with fierce fires which slowly wane,
And glimmer on the distant plain,
And lighten thro' the lonely lane.

The darken'd woods and dim dull streams
Brighten with the unearthly gleams
Which haunt the western gate of dreams;

Which drape the hovel, lifted high
Between the water and the sky,
In beauty that transports the eye;

And throw their bright prismatic ray
About the ruin'd, dying day,
Which sinks in darkness and decay;

Fallen about the fading west,
By dim decrepit fires caress'd,
And shades that suffer no arrest.

The gloom about the mountain's base
Crawls up and falls upon his face,
His form grows faint in night's embrace.

He takes upon his breast and head
The glow which from the plain has fled,
Ere yet the dying sun is dead.

The trailing glories droop and die
Along the lake where they did lie,
And the wild light forsakes the sky.

IV.

The circle of the changing year
Rounds slowly to the perfect sphere,
His wither'd sides grow brown and sere —

Along his lone and barren crest
The screaming gale, his only guest,
Roars from the wild and dreary west —

The cold and blustering winds intrude
In his steep glens, and strong and rude
Follow their immemorial feud.

Few now in these wild ways will come,
But each, beholding that bleak dome,
Draw close his cloak and hurry home.

His face above the frosty glen,
The stiff and stark and frozen fen,
Drops darkly from the thoughts of men.

The gray and sombre woodland grieves
In wither'd weeds of fallen leaves;
The patient earth her doom receives, —

Mourning her blacken'd parks of oak,
Like cities sack'd and scorch'd with smoke,
And wasting of a mortal stroke, —

Her stript and swept and frozen farms, —
Bare orchard trees, whose naked arms
The tender star-beam nightly charms.

V.

The winter brings her crystal swoon;
From her cold couch, the mystic moon
Burns with pale fire the dim lagoon;

Her image glitters where she looks
Upon the black and icy brooks,
In barren tracts and treeless nooks;

Her silver shackles flash and shake
Upon the wild and freezing lake,
When winds and waves are wide awake.

The stream runs low with frozen lip;
White storms their fleecy burden slip,
And cloak the peak from base to tip;

The dazzling day, the steel-blue night,
Bathe each bold crag and ice-capp'd height
In zones and shafts of naked light.

VI.

When dreams of summer suns grow dim,
New buds turn tender round his rim,
The voice of Spring streams over him,

To fall to earth in regions frore,
Around that hyperborean shore
Where her faint track appears no more.

The drear but pregnant days have birth,
Which sweep, thro' dismal scenes of dearth,
The husk of winter from the earth:

A thousand petty newborn rills
Foam from the glens, whose music fills
The cold recesses of the hills:

The ancient hollows of the snow
Shrink and grow foul, the ice fields show
The black and sullen pools below:

The wild birds clutch the naked trees,
Or flutter feebly in the breeze
Which blows across the barren leas:

The windy ways are thick and cold,
The young year looks decay'd and old,
The desolate peak more bleak and bold.

VII.

Bald crag, — he is more dead asleep
Than long drown'd seamen in the deep,
Where tides of awful stillness creep:

He would not hear the bitter cry
Should tender Youth and Beauty lie
Stretch'd on his sharpest stones to die.

What answers when the groping thought
Would probe the depths whence he was brought,—
The unknown past which speaketh naught?

What change has warped the hills and leas
Since first he rose to forms like these
Above the wild Laurentian seas?

The Alps and Andes were not born
When first he saw the beaming morn
Paint on the dark a world forlorn:

He heard the wind of Destiny
Speed trackless over land and sea,
Sowing the seeds of life to be:

Where now the youths and maidens climb,
The uncouth dragons of the prime
Crawl'd at the gloomy dawn of time:

He saw the arctic ice intrude
Into his realm, summer exclude,
And make a desert solitude.

The Frost his crystal coils unwound, —
In his cold circle crawl'd, wall'd round
With snows and frozen deeps profound.

VIII.

The savage roam'd the fruitful land, —
His past a gulf no bridge has spanned,
A stream which withers in the sand:

Either from Asia's ancient hives
The tempests tossed a few frail lives,
Whence the wild West her hordes derives;

Or Nature, working out her plan,
To mould the occidental man,
Wrought the rich clay of Yucatan.

There his wild roots took firmest hold,
In cruel cities, long of old,
Of which no traveler's tale is told:

Whose crimes bold Cortes guess'd of yore,
Finding along the lonely shore
Abandon'd altars smear'd with gore:

Whose thronging streets and temples stood
Where now decay and ruin brood,
Within a vast and ancient wood,

Strewed with crude idols, fallen prone,
The Molochs of a rite unknown,
Like that which stained the Druid's stone.

IX.

Beyond the middle stream and plain,
The race increas'd, from main to main, —
Grew mixed in blood, with many a strain;

Mound-builders and nomadic bands,
Cliff-dwellers, who in hostile lands
Hollow'd their homes with patient hands;

And cut the Colorado's wall
In forms grotesque, crude curve and scrawl,
Strange shapes of things that swim or crawl:

Warriors whose dusky mothers bore
Tecumseh, Uncas, Sagamore,
To keep the keys of savage lore;

Who hunted here their tawny herds,
And gave to mountains, brooks, and birds,
The poetry of lovely words:

Chocorua, whose utterance falls
Like mountain echoes, and recalls
Bald peaks, dark pines, and rocky walls;

Niagara, whose sound awakes
Wild cataract voices, roaring breaks
Of foam, white streams, and plunging lakes.

The sweet-lipp'd Susquehanna sings
The name they gave her, where she brings
Her whispering waters from the springs;

And Minnehaha in the West,
By those soft syllables caress'd,
Will chide her wild waves when they rest.

And scold each into song again,
To speak them to the pebbled plain,
The pathless wood and steep moraine.

They vanish'd like thin shreds of night,
And ragged mists, from creek and bight,
When seas are kissed with dawn's first light:

Their voices with the streams are roll'd,
And murmur when their names are told
The music of the tongues of old.

X.

A stronger race possess'd the soil,
To wrest therefrom the fruits of toil,
And load their homes with peaceful spoil:

Imperial peoples, crossing seas,
From lands long loved and lives of ease,
To colonize primeval leas;

Whose children rose to heights sublime;
Whose light increas'd to latest time,
Not reaching now the perfect prime;

Which yet but flickers thro' the gloom,
And flutters from the brinks of doom,
To meet the darkness of the tomb.

When earth forgets that man was born,
Monadnoc still shall hail the morn,
His aged crags not yet outworn.

He sits as when in moods of thought
Men stare with vacant eyes at naught,
Heedless of what around is wrought.

A Titan fallen from the stars
He seems, here in celestial wars
Hurl'd down, and seamed with fearful scars;

His brow upturn'd to that high realm
Where erst he rear'd his radiant helm,
And godlike rushed to overwhelm.

XI.

Take flight and circle all the sky,
More lofty mountains chain the eye,
The themes of dim antiquity;

The Hindu Kailas, and those twain
The twofold sacred rivers drain,
Drawing their waters to the plain;

And Taurus; Atlas, icy topped;
Tall Ararat whose pillars propped
The Ark when all the waters dropped;

The hills of Hellas, with their wells
And fabled waters, classic cells,
And column'd shrines and pine dark dells;

And many that sit eminent
Within the broad-plain'd Occident,
Cordilleras magnificent:

Primeval peaks of frost and fire, —
Dome, wall, and pinnacle and spire,
Which pierce the spirit with desire;

The ancient homes of high emprise,
Like ocean opening to the eyes
New lands, new hopes, and larger skies;

The seats of Freedom from of old,
Quarries and mines whose ribs infold
Rare crystals, silver, and pure gold;

The source of fruitful streams which flow
Thro' teeming continents below,
Beside whose banks great cities grow.

XII.

No everlasting ice has crown'd
The crag above, no gold is found
Within his rock-seal'd entrails bound

Yet here men feel the mystery,
The power and ancient royalty,
Which cloak the mountain and the sea.

Imagination lightly springs
From his bleak rock, and spreads her wings,
And scales the heaven's cloudy rings.

The cabin'd spirit here can find
Free pastures, and the jaded mind
The strength for which it was design'd.

No classic pool is here, or shrine,
But pillar'd temples of sweet pine,
And cool pure waters crystalline;

A clear and dappled brook, inlaid
With spotted sands, in sun and shade,
From his tall top a long cascade,

Till in the meads asleep it lies,
And changing color with the skies,
Mirrors the world like living eyes.

XIII.

Here at the death of lovely days,
What time the smouldering beam decays,
Dark phantoms haunt the dusky ways;

The shows of Fancy when she takes
The gleams and glooms of night, and wakes
A seeming life in forms she makes;

And working from dim clews, detects
Conceal'd resemblances, effects
Wrought of deep shade and day's bright wrecks:

Dark boles like voiceless sentinels stand,
The glow of sunset's glimmering brand
Burning along the dusky land:

A sunken thicket then appears
An ambush set with threatening spears;
A mask each groveling shadow wears,

And mocks the gloomy beasts of yore,
Whose shambling shapes appear no more,
Whose dens the little lads explore:

Fierce Bruin, burly, dull, uncouth,
Huge honey lover, his sweet tooth,
Blood-guilty, sharp, and bare of ruth, —

Content to grub for worms or rut
In rotten leaves, for herb or nut,
Or offal from the logger's hut:

The giant cat, who whilom kept
The woods in fear, who, crouching, crept
So softly cruel and adept;

The beautiful and pitiless,
Cloth'd with perfidious loveliness,
And smooth, soft skin that none caress;

Not now she rustles in the hush,
Or springs from bending branch to crush
The red deer in the trampled bush:

The moody moose, morose, forlorn,
His bearded head hung with huge horn,
A monstrous growth each year newborn,

A creature fashion'd in the mould
Of sombre forests vast and old,
Moss bound, and green thro' heat and cold, —

Obscure and sullen, timid, mild,
True birth of that rude northern wild
To whose dim swamps he seems exiled;

In touch with their mysterious shades,
Dark hemlocks, pines, and cedar glades
Whose mournful verdure never fades.

For him the lonely hunter waits
And watches till dawn penetrates,
In long bright cracks, night's sombre gates,

What time his monstrous antlers loom
Between the glimmering light and gloom,
And totter where he meets his doom.

XIV.

Here once a careless foot might wake
The coil'd and sleeping rattlesnake,
And raise him bristling from the brake:

Now where the dying sunbeam falls
He haunts the naked plains, or crawls
In cañons and by mountain walls.

A lonely lover of the sun,
Tho' armed with death, content to shun
The foe from which he will not run.

Whom oft the scout, at break of day,
Findeth beside the fainting ray
Of his dim fire, with dumb dismay;

Or warmed within some inner fold
Of his furred robe, made over-bold
By the old curse that keeps him cold.

The harmless adder yet may hide
Close by, upon the warm hillside,
Or cool'd beside some crystal tide;

His chequer'd cousin, curl'd among
The stones, may flicker with his tongue,
And hiss, yet leave his foe unstung.

The porcupine makes his wild home
By gloomy rills which roll in foam,
Dropped from the mountain's mighty dome:

The trout yet haunt the lucid streams,
Now pois'd, still as the golden beams,
Now darting thro' the watery gleams:

The grouse, conceal'd from curious eyes,
Drums in the wood, or whirring flies,
Leaving us still with sharp surprise:

A scornful eagle yet may dare
The distant shot, the shout, the stare,
And keep the lordship of the air:

And when the wild and waning year
Crisp curls the crystal mountain mere,
The wary waterfowl appear.

XV.

Tho' changed the forest flocks for herds
Of cattle milking cream and curds,
Call'd home at night with coaxing words,

Tho' half the wood is cut and cull'd,
Deep groves and dells there are unhull'd,
Where lone delight is yet undull'd:

The tall pines, vaulting vernal gloom,
Roof their dim aisles, whose depths entomb
The fallen beam, like some strange bloom:

The pale pool-haunting wood-flowers prank
The forest's floor, or dew-drench'd bank,
By rock, and brook, and stagnant tank.

The violet, in tangled nooks
Thro' which the shatter'd sunbeam looks,
Blooms near the velvet verge of brooks:

The honeysuckle hangs her bells,
By heated rocks, in bosky dells,
The wild bees haunt their honey cells:

The sumach burns along the steep,
In autumn, as the slow weeks creep
Into the year's long flowerless sleep:

The thistle, tasseled golden-rod,
The purple grape, and tufted pod,
Strew with cull'd blooms the faded sod:

In the still air, the maples blaze,
The beeches drop, thro' perfect days,
Their russet leaves o'er woodland ways;

Cream birches, yellow curtain'd, break
The cloudless, pale blue sky, and shake
Their sprays to the pellucid lake;

The curl'd cups of the gentian catch
The eye with hues the heavens match,
Tho' Winter's hand is on the latch.

XVI.

The mighty mountain sleeps thro' all
The changes of this earthly ball,
The dark, the light, the spring, the fall;

He has no message for man's ear,
He neither shares his hope or fear,
His playground or indifferent bier;

He dreams not of the deadman's night,
The wrongful blow, the trampled right,
The struggling beam, the misty light.

XVII.

Soft cirrhous clouds above him creep,
He rests in waters wide and deep,
Now placid as an infant's sleep:

The hours by day which sound below
Awake him not, nor may he know
Thro' the still night, their silent flow;

But when the arrowy lightnings plough
The night of storms, and split the bough,
The thunders, breaking round his brow,

Fill with tumultuous waves of sound
The heaven's gloomy gulf profound,
That beating 'gainst each rocky bound,

Smite his wild crags until they cry,
Whose echo'd thunders roll and fly
Thro' the loud caverns of the sky,

Sent forth from that invisible height
Across the chasm of the night,
Black wall'd about sharp rays of light;

As if a giant of the prime
Felt his forgotten strength sublime
Stir in a rude tempestuous time.

A RHYME IN THE SADDLE.

THE day shines dead upon the height,
  The dusky fields grow dimmer,
And one by one upon the night
  The stars begin to glimmer:
The wintry way is wild and lone,
  The wither'd birches shiver,
The wind forsakes them and is gone,
  I hear the flowing river.

I hold my horse against his will,
  He feels the frosty weather,
And links with perfect paces still
  The leagues of road together:
His flying feet beneath me sound,
  While all the world is quiet,
And with the hard melodious ground
  Dispute, coquet, and riot.

Bright bay with mane and tail like jet,
  His strength, Arabian graces,
Broad nostrils, shoulders strongly set,
  The gloss of high-born races,

Announce the line from which he came,
The blood which he inherits,
To English adding Eastern fame,
And fiery docile spirits.

I love a sleek and silken flank,
And neck full arched and rounded;
A neat and natty foot and shank,
In blood and bone well grounded;
Since I outgrew the top and toy,
And rode a piebald pony,
The horse has been to man and boy
A faithful friend and crony.

A second crop of joy is ripe
When, something stiff and weary,
I fill the dear post-prandial pipe,
And all about is cheery;
And by the fire "outwatch the Bear,"
And speed the time with talking,
And chase the flying brood of care
Until the day is walking.

When group'd about the brimming bowl,
Spice-hot to suit the season,
We feed the rising flow of soul,
And taste the feast of reason:

Or let the flying fancy range,
And flit o'er land and ocean,
Thro' all the coming year of change,
Whose wheels are now in motion.

For tho' the monarch wear his crown,
Tho' force and fraud yet flout us,
A morning to the past unknown
Begins to break about us:
New facts are blown with every wind,
And fall in fruitful furrows,
And thoughts long growing in the mind
Come trooping from their burrows.

The wind of progress gathers force,
And blows a froth of bubbles,
Vague plots to alter Nature's course,
And heal her hopeless troubles;
The false, the foolish, and the vain
Shall pass away together,
The true, the strong, the just remain,
And bring us fairer weather.

Tho' Demos rule the world at last,
Tho' where his power reaches,
The forms well honor'd in the past
Drop off like rotten peaches,

I hold the faith my fathers held,
And fast by their foundation, —
The State where License never yell'd, —
A democratic nation.

The fairest flower still will show
When old experience blossoms,
Too late in bud to fully blow
In young and blooming bosoms;
But this is true since first the fire
In aged blood grew colder,
The son is wiser than his sire,
A generation older.

But whither is creation hurl'd?
'T is said when stark and staring,
The remnant of a ruin'd world,
Slow forms of death outwearing,
Some comet or erratic star,
With dreadful detonations,
May strike and whirl it fast and far,
In sickening gyrations;

The hills shall topple in the wave,
Or crack in yawning chasms,
And Nature totter from her grave
In giant throes and spasms;

Broad ocean and the solid sphere
  Break up in misty masses,
And like a bubble disappear
  In thin and glowing gases.

Vague voices in the human clay
  Can cozen, pique, and flatter,
"The Spirit flits on wings away
  From dead and emptied matter;"
But let whatever will arise,
  I fear no pleasant folly,
Nor make my pass to Paradise
  A moral melancholy.

I would not rob the groaning earth
  Of its immortal berry,
And men with magic in their mirth
  To make Ill-nature merry;
My heart is warm with healthy blood,
  Not sapless as a shaving,
Not wholly bad if little good,
  And softer than the paving.

I ride by many a lonely ground;
  By farms and village stations,
I watch the lanterns moving round
  The yards and dim plantations;

Sometimes the darkness near me shakes,
A nearer spark moves quicker,
A little beam of light which makes
The giant shadows flicker.

I ride by many a lonely light,
And house with scarce a neighbor,
The homes of many a wither'd wight,
Bent low with honest labor;
Grown gray in ancient grooves of thought,
Unvexed by a new-comer,
The freshness of whose springs are brought
From summer unto summer.

Like gnarled and knotted oaks which grow,
Thro' good and evil weather,
In twisted quarrels, to and fro,
A hundred ways together;
And lift their gaunt and giant arms
To all the winds of heaven,
Deformed and torn with wintry harms,
Moss-bound and thunder-riven.

In discontent as much as scorn
We prate of rural bumpkins,
For most of ruling minds are born
Among the corn and pumpkins;

And that dumb strength which curbs the flood,
When blatant humbug babbles,
And stirs the thin and fever'd blood
Of hot and reckless rabbles.

But in the treadmill of the town,
And train'd in the professions,
We fear the public sneer or frown,
And make but faint impressions;
Each fitting by a sort of knack
His individual socket,
And pack'd together as we pack
A puzzle in its pocket.

And something too is lost we know,
That's to the person proper,
If round about the world we go,
From Zanzibar to Joppa;
For tho' the traveler receives
Addition from each nation,
Yet something of himself he leaves
Behind at every station.

God formed the world of ample size,
And built his barrier mountains,
That all the rills of earth should rise
Pure streams from separate fountains,

Should each its little world adorn,
With waves that leap and dally,
About the rocks where it was born,
Within its native valley.

SONNETS.

SONNETS.

IN MARCH.

I.

More than the days that bring the bursting pod
I like the bare bleak month when bluebirds come,
Spring's harbingers, to their new northern home,
And rural walks and woods are seldom trod;
When whistling rustics plough the breathing sod,
And floods expand in ponds or plunge in foam,
And easeless winds about the skyey dome
Errand the vast activity of God.
The rushing streams and surging, shifting skies,
The melting snows, and varied sun and shower,
Reveal the toils of a resistless Power,
Which sweeps decaying winter from men's eyes,
And breathes in languid minds fresh energies,
Before the budded branch or earliest flower.

THE SUPREME HOUR.

II.

MIGHT one forelearn the wisdom of his years,
Or know to rend the veil concealing fate,
What dominant hour of ill or good estate
Would rise the loadstar of his hopes or fears!
Were it some hour foreseen that now appears
His soul's supreme occasion and true date,
Or might his thoughts some humbler hour await,
And strong presentments prove untruthful seers!
But no oracular star, or choral chime,
Heralds that hour in human lives supreme. —
Be thou, O Soul, obsequious to the time,
The present hour that none or few esteem, —
Intent with curious cunning to elect
Thine unknown lord by signs that tempt neglect.

THE PERFECT STATE.

III.

SOFTLY the sea is lapping in the caves;
Lightly yon fishing boat it doth upbear,
Using its giant strength with gentle care:
Lashed by tormenting winds it rocks and raves,
Ridged in huge troughs and trenches, seamen's graves,
But soon to sleep again, serene and fair;
And in the depths, tho' tempests roar in air,
Perpetual quiet broods beneath the waves.
Thus, too, a bright and puissant State will be,
Whose power, revealed in strife, strikes fear and awe,
Whose heart is peace, made mild by liberty:
Storms may arise and broils and public war, —
Herself from transient tumult she will free,
And keep unchanged her ancient calm of law.

TO A LADY.

IV.

LADY, no more the Soul of Nature seems,
Where thou art, harsh or cold, but warm and mild,
The lovely mother of a lovelier child:
This sea which brightens in the moon's pale beams,
Mantling the blacken'd rocks with silver streams,
And rolling to the shore with uproar wild,
Seems soon by thy sweet neighborhood beguil'd,
And softly to thy fair feet crawls and creams.
Beauty like thine first taught the world to love,
Gave wings to care, and lull'd the ancient dread
Of nature as a charnel of the dead;
Thus to that ark the olive-bearing dove
Brought from afar its branch of green to prove
That the great deep was somewhere islanded.

TO SLEEP.

v.

Dim prince, enchanter, strong benignant Sleep!
When Night her dusky curtain round has hung,
Moving unseen, with silent step, among
Passion's pale sons, with healing slumbers deep,
Bidding soft dreams 'neath tired eyelids creep;
Spirit of peace, from brooding Darkness sprung,
Whose lulling hours, around the sad earth flung,
The phantoms of the day at distance keep,
And eyes long used to sorrow cease to weep;
"Brother to Death" in many a sweet lay sung,
Who lov'st in soft oblivion to steep
The sense of weary mortals, old and young;
Now midnight's drowsy warning bell has rung,
Oh, touch me, soothe me, silent, solemn Sleep!

VANITY.

VI.

If noble acts are marred by Vanity,
Without acts Vanity is doubly shamed,
Preposterous, impotent, and evil famed,
Wanting the proud excuse of victory,
The exaltation, fiery energy,
Which mark the chief of men by worlds acclaimed;
And all the pomp Obsequiousness has framed
To feed the Hero's self-complacency.
If, being big with purpose, Vanity
Bring forth disastrous failure and eclipse,
Like a sick womb or foiled conspiracy,
The curse of scorn falls from contemptuous lips;
But if Success a natural pride forego,
They speak a praise more pure than Cæsars know.

REVEILLE.

VII.

WHAT time in cold eclipse the world is drown'd,
If that the Sun uplift his shining face
Above the hills for his triumphant race,
Murmurs and hum of rousing men run round
The green earth's rim, hammers and axe resound,
Bugles to battles call, horns to the chase,
And smokes like incense rise to his steep place;
Such homage men must pay from their low mound.
Thus when the morning star of hope and will
Rises in minds inert and slumbering,
Drums beat to arms and sounding trumpets shrill,
Fires burn and banners fly, and anvils ring,
And active hands hew, weave, and plant and till,
Wherever thought takes outward shape and wing.

A SUMMER TEMPEST.

VIII.

ALONG the hills the breathless forests dream,
Unvisited, and in the yellow light
The grass grows golden, and the birches white
Print their pale shadows in the darken'd stream,
Each twig distinct imprest; no warblers seem
To stir the stagnant air, no wing takes flight;
Athwart the west, in sombre purple dight,
The silver, silent lightnings sharply gleam.
Anon a spreading gloom creeps up the sky,
The Tempest drapes the azure dome in black,
Rolls up the rain, the whirlwind, and the rack,
And thunders in a roaring torrent by;
And every jeweled spray, afar and high,
Sparkles and glitters in its dewy track.

THE BLOCKHOUSE.

IX.

On this low mound above the foaming falls,
A hill of vantage when in days of old
The vast primeval forest round them roll'd,
The watchful woodsman reared these ruin'd walls,
Whence men yet cut the buried musket balls;
In times of fierce attack their safety-hold,
When broke in near, like wolves upon the fold,
The painted hordes whose memory yet appalls.
The deep and gloomy forest is no more,
These black and wasted walls are near their end,
Round them to-day broad farms and shires extend;
Nature retains no images of yore
But the still waters rippling round the bend,
And lapping in the sedges by the shore.

THE DUAL NATURE OF MAN.

X.

Affection, Passion, Sorrow and Delight,
Ambition, Discontent, and Love and Hate,
Appear in each man's mind and rule his fate,
The weeds and flowers of life, the wrong and right
Which mar or grace its every depth and height:
Yet each can truth and harmony create,
The good refine, the evil subjugate,
Ruling the ill he cannot disunite.
Tho' sudden tempests shake this mortal ark,
Tho' Discord ever seeks her ancient sway,
Grief blinds us in a rough and stony way,
Fair days wear out in gloom which hides the mark, —
Something is gained from the primeval dark
To cheer the earnest Seeker and repay.

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS.

XI.

Rivers of gold, and wondrous argosies,
With purple sails, and banners gaily dight, —
Palace and porch, and walls of shining light,
Which seem'd but now to crowd the western skies,
Have faded from the world's delighted eyes:
Belated on the borders of the night,
I watch the ethereal shape take flight,
And from the darken'd earth the twilight dies.
The faded fields grow formless, cold, and stark,
Fallen in shadow, like a lifeless swoon,
And sunk in black oblivion lie forlorn;
But now low down, a nebulous light is born,
Where veil'd beyond the pines, the mellow moon
Pencils a fairy world upon the dark.

DAWN.

XII.

BETWEEN the Dayspring and the dying Moon
I rode when winds were dreaming; faint, forlorn,
The Star of Morning sank in seas of dawn;
Girt in gray hills, where lay a low lagoon,
Spectral and dim the curling mists did swoon:
Like a wan lady waking from dark dreams,
Earth lay beneath the waning moon's pale beams,
Breathing the languid airs of middle June.
It was the hour when oftenest sick men die,
Like stars that shrivel in the morning's breath;
When life's great tide ebbs backward sullenly,
Bearing lost souls to unknown deeps of death,
Ere the great Sun, with outstretched, kingly hand
Calls all its waters back through all the land.

XIII.

"This said, he set his foot upon the light."

THOU sayest, thinking that thy youth has past
Lost to one hope, thy early, only quest,
"Behold the law herein made manifest,
What fate has fixed no god can overcast,
Hard is the toil, and Azrael follows fast;
Were it not better in cool courts to rest,
And mock the insolent hours with mirth and jest,
Whose hands are shut to smite us at the last."
Beware lest thou should'st sometime after stand
And mark with cold uncomprehending eyes
Thy maiden Hope immaculate arise,
Beseeching with entreating lips and hand,
Yet feel no chord respond to her command,
And in thy soul no tender memories.

A LAST WISH.

XIV.

As one long hounded by ill winds and seas,
Outstretched in some serene and fruitful isle,
Exults the more that he despaired erewhile,
So, haply, one unwonted erst to ease,
Love's delicate ways and days more deeply please.
The frown of Fortune must make dear her smile,
Her gifts appear more rare by each sad mile
Of sea men traverse to her island leas.
I would not quarrel with the tardy fate
Which brought my bark, tho' 'neath a stormy sky,
To quiet lands where only zephyrs sigh,
But let me suffer now Time's fiercest hate,
Rather than reach a happier shore too late,
Like some wreck'd wretch who gains the rocks to die.

IN THE WOODS.

XV.

It is not fantasy that I divine
A ministration in the touch of earth,
And failing power, take thence a second birth
Of heart and hope. The life of oak or pine
Not more dependent is thereon than mine,
Thence harvesting true health and natural mirth
In spring's abundance or in autumn's dearth,
A part with them in Nature's vast design.
The fresher fields are those that, winter sick,
The traveler seeks in early March, and feels
His strength renewed, twice paid for what is spent;
The power that breathes around to him is lent,
Into his veins a quickening life stream steals
That cannot pierce our sheathèd streets of brick.

IN THE STREET.

XVI.

METHINKS invisible agencies there are
'Twixt soul and soul; that each to each extends
A salutation, and in passing, blends
Its being, by the body's sensual bar
Impeded not; that none, or near or far,
Their fellows meet, but that each spirit bends
In sympathy — is altered in its ends —
As dips the needle to the northern star.
If this be fantasy, my soul yet feels
A perturbation in these thronging streets;
The agitations of innumerous souls
Evinced in vagaries my own reveals,
That like a faithful compass falsely cheats,
Drawn from its centre by conflicting poles.

POEMS.

POEMS.

SISLADOBSIS LAKE.

I.

Upon the low dim verge of night,
The Moon, new risen, shines,
And hangs, a golden globe of light,
Above the distant pines.

Received into the glowing skies,
She looks along the world;
From each white cliff that underlies,
The troubled Dark is hurled:

Driven to lurk in black-browed woods,
In many a secret lair:
Alone the new-born brightness broods
On shining lake and air.

With rapid strokes, the light canoe
Is darted from the shade,
A shallop that might float in dew
So delicately made.

The paddles flash like glistening gems,
  Lave their bright blades, and make
Swift circles round their buried stems,
  A shining silvery wake.

Again we shoot into the dark,
  Beneath the fir-fringed shore,
And lightly land our dripping bark,
  And pace the pebbly floor.

II.

O pleasant toils by stream and mere,
  By distant hill and dale,
When Autumn paints the fading year,
  And freshening frosts prevail!

How sharp and clear the crispy air,
  How calm and crystal cool
It doth envelop all things fair,
  Far cliff and dreaming pool!

Within its delicate depths all day
  The braided cloudlets crept,
Unnoticed; cradled far away
  The drowsy Zephyrs slept;

All day, till evening drooped her wings,
We toiled and wearied not,
And drank at its unsullied springs,
By all the world forgot.

III.

Tall grows the ruddy forester,
By him the dew is trod,
The frosts of morn; early astir
With rifle and with rod,

He breathes the tender air and breaks
The dreamy bonds of sleep,
What time along the glassy lakes
The mists of morning creep:

He sees the thin gray smoke that steals,
Like some mute sacrifice,
Into the windless void and feels
Its way along the skies:

And hears the ringing axe that makes
The morning musical;
Anon the crashing pine that shakes
The turf beneath its fall.

All day beneath the pale blue dome
He haunts the lonely stream,
Where restless falls are dashed in foam,
Or stiller waters dream;

Or brushing thro' the silent woods,
By dim discovered trails,
Is lost in far off solitudes,
In distant groves and dales.

The sombre fires of sunset burn
To warn him from those ways,
And brighten round his late return
Thro' many a shadowy maze.

All night his dying camp-fire gleams
Beneath the deepening gloom;
All night he hunts the deer in dreams,
Thro' dells of feathery bloom.

IV.

Deep shadows on these gloomful bays,
Deep shadow by the shore,
Save where the mirrored moonbeam lays
Its shaft of shining ore;

Or falls in some translucent plot
To make the forest bright,
And drops full many a gleaming clot
And crust of silvery light.

Home bound from distant streams we bring
The spoil of lake and wood, —
The teal with iris-tinted wing,
And chestnut tawny hood;

The loon, most melancholy bird,
Whose mournful laugh or cry,
At dawn or quiet eve, is heard
Within the brooding sky:

A gray wild goose that these still lakes
Drew downward from the cloud,
Hasting from lands the sun forsakes
And frost and ice enshroud, —

Flying between the pine and palm,
The snowflake and the flower;
From northern tempests to the calm
Of tropic stream and bower:

A father of the forest flocks,
In fatness like the bream,

Killed in mid flight among the rocks
Of a foam whitened stream.

With pæans round the festal board,
How may the Muse relate,
Recounting feats by fell and ford, —
The victim's plaintive fate?

Can she forget, when lull'd the pulse,
The quick and panting prey,
The blood and ruin that insults
The pure unsullied day —

And Nature's fearful mysteries
Of entrail, duct, and gland,
Betrayed before unknowing eyes,
By an unfeeling hand?

Let those condemn who are content
To stuff their ribs with bread;
Yet must the Falconer lament
The plumed swan, stained and dead.

v.

Give honor to the old bow string,
The arms of Robinhood;
But Killdeer has a fleeter wing
To fly by fell and flood.

Give honor to the Lincoln green,
But fitter clad, no doubt,
Is crafty Leather Stocking seen
In fawn skin, fringed about.

To him these woods are thick with signs;
These groves of gloomy firs,
Dark forests of primeval pines,
And swampy junipers:

Such as in Scandinavia rear,
Beneath the northern night,
Their towery tops, by cataract sheer,
Fiord and gleaming bight:

As dear to men of sturdier seed
As are the date and palm
To men of softer southern breed,
In lands of tropic calm.

Long leagues or healthy toil will rack
The toughest thews of men,
But not with the fatigues that track
The spent and travailing pen;

Or warp the wrinkled wretch who wrings,
From an impoverished soil,
Made poor by thirty growing springs,
A scant and meagre spoil.

Soon shall the crackling camp-fire throw
Its beams upon the night,
And groups of ruddy faces glow
About its flickering light:

Old tales be told of hart and hound,
And moose of mighty girth,
And cups of mystic fire run round
To loose the lips of Mirth.

And each at last his blanket seek,
And seal day-wearied eyes,
Until another morning streak
With rose the eastern skies.

VI.

Not Garda's nor yet Como's floods
A clearer depth disclose
Than thine, broad lakelet of the woods,
In sunlight and repose:

When all thy fringed and rocky shore,
In vivid beauty drest,
Is mirrored on thy glassy floor,
Each leaf distinct imprest;

With all the white-faced clouds that float
In the cerulean blue;
And every painted passing boat,
Or bird of brilliant hue.

Not Constance rolls a whiter foam,
When frosty night winds scream,
And brightening in the dark blue dome,
The moons of Autumn gleam;

And bursting billows follow fast
The fragile flying bark,
Roll'd like a cork before the blast,
And tossing toward its mark.

Cold from the gateways of the north
The starlight tempests sweep,
And fleck the frozen beach with froth,
And fret the forest's sleep;

Their keen and vigorous streams are blown
About the boatman's hair,
And dash his face with spray, and moan
Within the upper air.

But later fiercer frosts will steal
Into these naked woods,
On slow and silent wings, and seal
In ice their crystal floods;

And touch the lake with numbing breath,
And throw a subtle chain
About its waves, hid soon beneath
A dark and glittering plain,

That still reflects the stars, and takes
The crimson tints of eve,
Until the softly falling flakes
Its winter garment weave.

TO TELEMACHUS.

Beware if lying lips
  To self-content entice;
Who of their honey sips
  Drinks from the cup of vice:
    Yea! Eve in Eden heard
    No more insidious word.

Swerve not if Scorn or Hate
  At thee their arrows try,
Above their worst thy state,
  Malignant truth or lie:
    The wounds that they impart
    Betray the guilty heart.

Let not the hope to climb
  Tempt thee to harlotries,
To prostitute thy time
  And virgin energies;
    Nor desecrate or stain
    Thy hand with ill-got gain.

Forgotten histories,
In costly tomes ornate,
In vain immortalize
The fortunate and great;
Yet may a simple song
A virtuous fame prolong.

Distrust the treacherous sense
Of power, the throes of youth;
The withering heats intense
Of time, which know not ruth,
Will dry thy little brook,
So noisy in its nook.

ÆQUAM SERVARE MENTEM.

WHO gives his peace, too much he gives,
  Tho' for the victor's wreath;
To rack thereby the life he lives,
  And breathe a troubled breath.

That is the act of petty powers,
  And talents over-tried;
True greatness grows thro' quiet hours,
  A deep yet tranquil tide.

The men who live upon the lips,
  The strong, the calm, the sane,—
Felt not the fierce uneasy whips
  Which vex the weak and vain;

But strove in simple scorn of ease,
  Nor look'd to Fortune's lure;
Content to win by slow degrees
  The praises of the pure.

They made no boast, put forth no claim,
  Not wanting self-respect,
Nor fever'd by the thirst for fame,
  Nor sicken'd by neglect.

But let no unused day go by,
  And forced, in spite of chance,
The golden opportunity,
  The crowning circumstance.

Or if a sudden hope arose,
  Theirs the decisive thought
Which moves in act, quick to propose,
  And quick to action brought;

The iron will which like a wedge
  Forces opposing walls,
The firmness of a rocky ledge
  Which curbs the foaming falls.

Self-knowledge, making strong and mild
  And worth, which all accost,
Held them above the stormy wild
  Where vain desire is tost.

LINES.

MAN in his hour of pride saith haughtily,'
"Long labored Earth, and lo, for me her toil,
The fruit whereof is mine, and sea and soil,
And lives innumerable that live for me.

The fate of bird and beast is in my hand, —
I slay the rushing lion from afar,
And read the riddle of an unseen star,
And look into the sun and understand.

Winds blow and waters roll to feed my state,
The rapid lightning I have turned apart,
The desert blooms beneath my wand of art;
Yea, like a god I fashion and create.

But what is man, whose outworn buried bones
Survive to mock his living memory?
"The hills sleep on in their eternity,
The man is lost beneath sepulchral stones.

IN MEMORIAM.

O ye delightful days of youth,
Now mourn'd with pity and with ruth,
With love and wisdom mourn'd too late, —
How fair, beyond compare, his fate
Who learns your sovereign worth when young,
And loves the song when it is sung:
Who never from his purpose fell
To love life well and use it well;
And looking backward still can see
Day link'd to day in symmetry;
Whose summers never cease to be
A bright and pleasing memory;
Dead summers, far too dead for tears
Beneath the snows of twenty years!

'Tis more than hoarded gold to be
From fickleness of faith set free:
'Tis well for him whose path is made
Where seldom carking cares invade;
Or in the green fields or the wood
We hide from every sullen mood,

And ply the pencil and the brush,
Or hunt the habits of the thrush,
We find our profit being brought
To nature in our life and thought.
So shall our summers ever be
A bright and cloudless memory,
Dead summers not to mourn with tears
Beneath the snows of twenty years.

BOAT SONG.

AFLOAT, afloat, in a gallant boat,
We would not be ashore,
Tho' storms arise and hide the skies,
And some return no more.

The harbor clear'd, the good ship steer'd
Straight for the open sea;
The winds that sweep along the deep
Have not more liberty.

The favoring gale fills out our sail,
And lightly we are gone;
And touching here and touching there
On easy wings are borne.

The roving breeze, the rushing seas,
Will bear us compady,
And fleecy clouds that float in crowds
Above the topmast tree.

The snowy deck no dust can fleck,
A fair familiar lea;
The whistling cords, like singing birds,
Sound in the topmast tree.

Let others boast their quiet coast,
We love the foaming sea,
Our stormy hours more than their bowers,
And lives from care set free.

ELEGIACS.

Many at first indecisive yet come, ere too late, to decision;
Few, once decision is lost, ever possess it again.

Vices attack us as barnacles cover the bottoms of vessels;
Vices so gather'd we may haply be freed from in time:
Vices ingrained in our natures like faults in a vessel's construction
Never forsake us, yet are faults we can never avoid.

Justly the age of the Poet partakes of his glory and honor;
For the heart of his time beats in the Poet's own song.

Not that the loving ones flatter, O Cynic, we joy
in their presence —
Better when near them we are; haply in that is
the charm.

Even the lives of the greatest are veiled from in-
quisitive mortals;
Like the Creator himself, only in deeds they ap-
pear.

Eagerly seek'st thou the plaything, my spaniel,
and only to drop it;
Also we often attain (vainly) the bauble suc-
cess.

Temper seduces the wisest of mortals to speak
like the foolish;
Patience enables the fool often to seem like the
wise.

Back to the ocean the cloud-scattered waters in-
cessantly hasten;
So to eternity Time ever is hurrying back.

As the Atlantic, O mortals, all trace of our passage destroyeth,
So shall the ocean of time cover the traces of man.

EPIGRAMS.

As the sleek coats of panthers please the sight,
So that we half forget the cruel heart,
So manners to an evil mind impart
A grace in which the wisest may delight.

Some natures, like cathedral glass,
Opaque and cold to outward sight,
If to their heart we find a pass
Transfigured shine and bathed in light.

You for men's bodies plot and plan;
You for their souls as best you can;
And I for men's and my behoof,
Serve my own soul, build my own roof.

Wouldst seem to friends and neighbors wise?
Appear so first to other eyes.
Wouldst seem of goodly strength to men?
Strive not with Gods or Angels then.

I hold the world is like a billiard table:
It has its fatal pockets, wherein trips
The heedless mortal, meeting fell eclipse;
And he who plays to win there must be able
To make rebuffs the means to gain his end,
And to a crook'd progression condescend.

The mannerless are like a stagnant pool
Which travelers avoid with patient care;
Conflict with such befits the boor or fool,
The wise will shun the insult and forbear.

The screaming night is wild with driving snow,
And bitter blasts about the welkin blow.
Huge waves, like sheeted sea ghosts, climb the rocks,
To fall incessant back with streaming locks;
Far on the spectral deep they shriek and rise
Round some doomed ship and storm against the skies;
Yet deep in yonder castle's gloomy keep
The Queen of Beauty still doth softly sleep.

Knowing the peach is ripe enough to eat,
Let it not hang till superfinely sweet,
Lest one less hypercritical than thou,
While thou delayest, break it from the bough.

If thou desirest Happiness,
Let not the past thy mind depress;
These, too, she will demand of thee,
Serenity, activity.